United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

◆ Security Council expresses concern of deteriorating situation in Yugoslavia -- especially "tragic humanitarian" situation; welcomes Secretary-General's decision to continue mission of Cyrus Vance.

◆ Twenty-three Governments pledge $928,953 at World Disarmament Campaign pledging conference for 1991.

◆ Following suspension of negotiations over visit of Portuguese Parliamentary delegation to East Timor, Secretary-General appeals to Governments of Indonesia and Portugal to reconsider their positions.

◆ French representative tells Political and Security Committee that his country's nuclear testing programme guarantees safety necessary for protection of environment and public health.

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The Security Council held consultations this afternoon to consider the Secretary-General's report of 24 October on the situation in Yugoslavia.

Following consultations, the President of the Security Council, Chinmaya Rajaninath Gharekhan of India, told correspondents that the Council was concerned over the deteriorating situation in Yugoslavia and especially what he called "the tragic humanitarian" situation in that country. Members of the Council particularly welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to continue with the mission to Yugoslavia of his Personal Envoy, Cyrus Vance.

The President said Council members had also expressed concern that the arms embargo imposed by its resolution 713 (1991) was not being respected.

In the Secretary-General's report, which is based on a previous ten-day mission to Belgrade and other European cities by Cyrus Vance, the Secretary-General called for a halt to the fighting and a negotiated settlement to the four-month conflict in Yugoslavia. He said he had asked the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Mrs. Sadako Ogata, to consider assisting the 300,000 internally displaced persons affected by the

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fighting. The Secretary-General called the problem of refugees "the most serious humanitarian problem" caused by fighting, aside from direct casualties and the destruction of housing and various infrastructural facilities.

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Twenty-three Governments pledged yesterday almost $1 million at the ninth United Nations Pledging Conference for the World Disarmament Campaign. In addition to the Voluntary Trust Fund of the World Disarmament Campaign, contributions were made to the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament and to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research.

Addressing the Conference, its President, Nugroho Wisnumurti of Indonesia, said that despite broad support from member countries for disarmament activities, the weak financial base of the Campaign could not sustain it over a period of time. The Campaign had therefore been unable to fully respond to numerous requests from its constituencies.

Also addressing the Conference, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs Yashushi Akashi said that "just as the world Disarmament Campaign is meeting new challenges, it is being handicapped be a weak financial base". He expressed hope that the valuable activities of the Campaign and the Regional Centres would be continued and even expanded through the assistance of States.

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A United Nations spokesman said today that following reports that the Governments of Indonesia and Portugal had suspended negotiations on a visit of a Portuguese Parliamentary delegation to East Timor,the Secretary-General had appealed to the two sides to reconsider their positions.

The spokesman said the Secretary-General had made the appeal in view of the extensive preparations that had already taken place and the agreement reached during talks held in New York that the names of the international journalists on that visit be discussed informally. Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar expressed hope that the matter would be resolved through further discussions.

The reason for the suspension was that Indonesia had vetoed the participation of an Australian journalist who was to accompany the Portuguese delegation, the spokesman said.

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The representative of France, Gerard Errera, defended his country's nuclear testing programme on the grounds of legitimate defence needs, as the General Assembly's First Committee (Political and Security) this morning continued its disarmament debate. "The conditions under which the French tests are performed present all the guarantees of safety necessary for the protection of the environment and public health", he added.

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France conducted the tests under a strictly limited programme and the frequency of the tests had constantly been declining, Mr. Errera said. France's nuclear tests, carried out underground on its national territory, he noted, were not prejudicial to the interests of the States of the region. France had invited the representatives of States of the region as well as independent international scientists to verify for themselves the effects of the tests on the environment and the geological character and the health of the populations of the region. The tests had demonstrated that the artificial radioactivity near the French test site did not differ in level nor in quality from that of the rest of the South Pacific or the South Atlantic, Mr. Errera said.

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